

GLOBAL NEWS LINE

MONGOLIA

The government of Mongolia invites expressions of interest from eligible consultants for technical assistance during the implementation of a rural energy systems project.

Mongolia plans to use a credit from the International Development Association (IDA) to fund a consulting contract for technical assistance, training and technical services for small heat and electricity distribution systems in six provincial centers in rural areas. The government seeks the following assistance:

- Train utility staff and local Mongolian consultants in the economics of power networks.
- Train utility staffs and local Mongolian consultants in financial management techniques.
- Assist with the proper installation of equipment and material for both power and heat networks.

The energy authority of Mongolia's project implementation unit team will coordinate this project. The consultant will work closely with this team to achieve project objectives. Implementation will take three years. The energy authority invites eligible utility-based consultants, who have experience with small systems and rural areas, to indicate their interest in providing services.

The energy authority expects the consultant to place great importance on working well with and understanding local Mongolian culture. Consultants should be prepared to use local experts and Mongolian-speaking advisors extensively.

KOREA

In Korea, total solid waste volume has gradually increased from 141,000 tons per day in 1993 to 194,700 tons per day in 1997. Korea's total municipal waste volume has been trending downward since 1990, but industrial

waste volume has increased at an annual average rate of more than 10 percent, surpassing the volume of municipal waste in 1993. Korea's per capita municipal waste volume declined from 1.3 kilograms in 1994 to 0.96 kilograms in 1998. This decline resulted from the enforcement of the Volume-based Collection Fee System, which entered in to force in 1995.

Under pressure from the Korean government to expand municipal waste incineration capacity, local governments built 44 incineration plants, including 23 large-scale plants, between 1993 and 2000 with subsidies supplied by both the central government (Ministry of Environment, MOE) and regional governments. The total value of the 23 large incineration projects currently operating is \$592 million. As of July 2001, seven new municipal incineration projects are underway nationwide. From 2001 through 2005, nationwide local governments will initiate 21 new incineration projects and 41 expansion projects according to the MOE master plan.

SINGAPORE

Effective November 9, the Government of Singapore reduced the license fee for certain categories of telecom operators in Singapore. The Government's Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) – the official telecom regulator – reduced the annual license fee payable by individually licensed Services Based Operators (SBO) by at least 50 percent. The IDA now charges a flat fee of S\$5,000 per annum for each SBO (Individual) license. The previous fee was one percent of annual gross turnover with a minimum of S\$10,000. Guided by CS Singapore, several Embassy sections had raised this issue as an impediment to bandwidth traders locating in Singapore. The IDA's fee reduction will benefit the 119 individually licensed SBOs now operating, which should stimulate a highly competitive environment in this industry. Information on telecom developments

in Singapore can be found at www.ida.gov.sg, or by contacting Ms. Chia Swee Hoon of CS Singapore at: Sweehoon.Chia@mail.doc.gov.

INDIA

The Wind Power Program in India, initiated in 1983-84, was aimed at catalyzing commercialization of wind power generation on a large scale in the country. The program involved wind resource assessment to identify the potential locations for wind power generation; demonstration of new technologies and creation of infrastructure through a limited number demonstration projects; development of commercial wind power projects; research and development; institutional finance for commercial projects; performance and monitoring; wind energy estates for small investors and so on.

India is implementing the world's largest wind resource assessment program comprising wind monitoring, wind mapping and complex terrain projects. This program covers 800 stations in 24 states with 193 wind monitoring stations in operation at present. Scientific surveys are being intensified to identify specific viable and potential sites. 177 sites have so far been identified in 13 States, which have potential of about 45,000 MW. A good local production base for wind turbines now exists in the country. Most of the leading, state-of-the-art international models of wind turbines are being manufactured and installed in the country. New initiatives include wind turbine design and operational improvements, expansion of wind resource database and enlargement of the user profile to encompass large corporates.

With the increasing commitment by the Government of India to pursue both pollution control measures and cleaner technologies, the need for environmental expertise and clean energy options are growing fast. Economic liberalization has resulted in decreased import tariffs and industry competitiveness

hinges on cleaner production. Scarcity of natural resources like water and raw material inputs like coal, oil and gas are also forcing greater operational efficiency.

Prospects for export of wind energy technology and systems from the U.S. to India are moderate. Indian companies are seeking joint ventures and licensing arrangements with foreign companies. The estimated number of foreign collaborations in the environmental goods sector is about 200. Indian companies have most partnership with the U.S. (40 percent), followed by the United Kingdom (21 percent), Germany (17 percent), Sweden (6 percent), Netherlands (5 percent) and the rest from Japan, Denmark, Switzerland, Canada, Australia and France.

ITALY

In Italy both public and private fitness establishments have increased in the past 25 years in a proportion equal to the increase of Italians participating in a physical activity.

According to recent reports, the number of fitness establishments in Italy has reached 143,523, corresponding to 251.7 spaces for every 100,000 inhabitants. Also, since 1989, there has been an increase of 15,000 new establishments (12% increase). These figures are even more impressive considering that there were only 34,936 establishments recorded in 1961.

According to data provided by Federpalestre (an association of private gyms and fitness clubs) there are 9,000 private gyms in Italy, far more than the 6,072 gyms recorded in the 1997 census statistics.

With the increase of gyms and fitness centers in past years, there has also been an increase of companies specializing in gym equipment, accessories, Wholemeal foods (Energybars, etc.), sport shoes and sportswear.

According to Federpalestre the companies dominating these markets are those specializing in weight machines and equipment. However, the increased knowledge and sophistication of Italian end-users of fitness equipment (both institutional and private) means they are no longer satisfied with rudimentary local production and low-quality imports.

In addition, in order to maintain club memberships, clubs have raised the quality of instruction and equipment and added medical-fitness equipment. High-tech exercise equipment featuring electronic LED readouts is attracting interest in the fitness equipment market.

Although future growth is likely to come from purchases by both the institutional and home markets, many in the fitness industry believe that the retail home fitness sector, which currently holds a 30 percent share of the total market, is gaining ground at the expense of the institutional market.

U.S. brands of fitness equipment are widely considered to be among the best in the world. This excellent reputation puts U.S. manufacturers in a good position to boost sales in Italy. The greatest opportunities for success are for American companies offering state-of-the-art quality products in the home and gym fitness markets distributed through well-established local firms. Several U.S. producers are already present in the Italian fitness market and are considered by the industry to be technically superior. Of the U.S. brands selling on the Italian market, the best known is Life Fitness.

LATVIA

On August 28, 2001, the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia approved changes in Value Added Tax (VAT) tariffs in Latvia and introduced a reduced tariff rate of 9 per cent for several groups of goods and services starting from 2003. This move was a part of Latvia's preparations for joining the European

Union and to change the VAT tariff scheme in compliance with the European Union requests.

The new reduced tariff will replace the existing zero percent tariffs and will be introduced for the goods and services were VAT exempt earlier.

Currently there is an 18 per cent VAT rate in Latvia on most goods and services.

BRAZIL

According to the Brazilian Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, attendance last year grew 25 percent compared to 1999, with 19 million visitors. Revenues grew at the same pace, from \$123 million to \$159 million (using an exchange rate of 2.70 reais per U.S. dollar). Industry sources forecast that in the next 5 years the sector will receive more than \$1 billion in investments. Although this sector is beginning to mature, there are still excellent short-term business opportunities, according to the Association's President.

The real growth in theme and entertainment parks in Brazil started five years ago. This sector has received \$1.2 billion in investments, with the annual turnover expected to be \$558 million over the next five years.

According to research conducted by the Brazilian Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions (BAAAP) in 1999, there are 202 such parks in Brazil, including theme parks, water parks, entertainment areas and new projects. According to the BAAAP's President, Brazilians have incorporated entertainment parks as an option for their weekend leisure activities. ■

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